



H.Con.Res. 151 - Noting the disturbing pattern of killings of dozens of independent journalists in Russia over the last decade, and calling on Russian President Vladimir Putin to authorize cooperation with outside investigators in solving those murders

Floor Situation

H.Con.Res. 151 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ) on March 3, 2007. The bill was ordered to be reported from the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

H.Con.Res. 151 is expected to be considered on the floor on June 18, 2007.

Summary

H.Con.Res. 151 resolves the following:

- Recalls the essential role that transparency and the free flow of information play in creating and preserving democratic institutions and civil society in any country,
- Recognizes the vital contribution made by independent journalists in Russia in bringing transparency and a free flow of information to readers after decades of Communist censorship and repression,
- Notes the disturbing trend of murders of independent journalists in Russia over the last decade,
- Encourages the President of the United States to formally offer Russian President Vladimir Putin and other officials of the Russian Government, United States Government law enforcement investigative assistance to help identify and bring to justice those responsible for the many unsolved murders of journalists in Russia during the past decade, and;
- Urges President Putin to seek out competent, outside law enforcement assistance in the investigation of the unsolved murders of numerous independent journalists in Russia.

Background

On July 9, 2004, Paul Klebnikov, the editor of the Russian version of Forbes Magazine who was investigating suspect business dealings and corruption cases in Russia, was shot to death in Moscow. The murder remains unsolved.

On October 7, 2006, Anna Politkovskaya, an acclaimed Russian journalist and human rights activist who wrote numerous articles critical of Russia's prosecution of the war in Chechnya, of human rights abuses by the Russian Government, and of Russian President Vladimir Putin, was shot to death. This murder also remains unsolved.

On March 2, 2007, Ivan Safronov, a military affairs reporter for the Russian newspaper 'Kommersant' who wrote articles criticizing the failure of Russian military programs and who was planning to report on potential Russian arms sales to Middle Eastern countries, including to state sponsors of terrorism Iran and Syria, died in mysterious circumstances, falling five stories from a window in the stairwell of his apartment building in Moscow. Russian prosecutors subsequently suggested that Mr. Safronov may have committed suicide, although he left no suicide note and had just bought fresh fruit prior to his death.

According to the International News Safety Institute, close to 90 reporters were murdered in Russia between January 1996 and the present and a great many of those murders remain unsolved. Over the period of the last ten years Russia holds the second position in the world in the number of journalists killed.

Staff Contact

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